

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

THE TREATMENT OF INSANITY.

**BEHIND THE BARS.** 12mo. pp. 356. Lee & Shepard.  
The purpose of this interesting volume is to unveil the interior of an American insane asylum, from facts and impressions obtained from personal experience. Although the name of the author is withheld, the work is evidently the production of a singularly intelligent and cultivated writer, familiar with the sources of literary illustration, with an ordinary command of expression, and an exact and discriminating judgment. No disposition is shown to exaggerate the infelicities that are portrayed, or to demand improvements of a romantic or impracticable character. There is no complaint of personal ill-treatment, no bitterness at the remembrance of greater sufferings during the period of detention, no spirit of captious fault-finding with the government and discipline of any institution; but the general system of the management of the insane adopted in this country is subjected to a searching criticism, which is fully sustained by a calm exposition of facts and a forcible illustration of details. The writer has no doubt of the necessity and importance of insane asylums. None but the profoundly ignorant, it is justly remarked, could hint at any objection to their maintenance and continual support. It is a false philanthropy which would open the doors of the asylum, and launch at once upon society a host of helpless beings incapable of self-protection. Not the principle of action, but the arrangement of system is denounced in the present volume.

In the opinion of the writer, neither the physician, nor the attendants, can enter into the real sufferings of the patient. They are so accustomed to this aggregate condition of misery that they merely tire themselves at the sight of the inmates.

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The treatment of the insane, physical and moral, is a subject that has engaged the attention of many of the country's best writers. A number of schemes have been proposed, very few have resulted in lifting the destined mark, and very little light has come out of the darkness. The writer, however, while he admits that the result rather of medical philanthropy than due to science. In this, let it not be left unsaid, much has been done; yet the facts attest the sorry condition that the diagnosis of the disease has followed upon these individuals. On the other hand, the treatment has steadily increased, and kept in harmonic pace with the advancement of modern civilization and progress. Hearing its impress in the train of good and ill alike, the writer has no doubt of the truth of the statement that "an intense application of the faculties of the mind, and a more constant strain upon the physical powers, has tended largely to multiply its forms and manifestations."

Among the evils of the prevailing treatment of the insane, the writer dwells at length upon the arrangements in regard to the sleep of the patient, which, as they are practically carried out, become the occasion of intense suffering. In addition to the mechanical or personal appliances that are forced upon the inmates of the hospital, there is a corps of attendants called watchers, who are required to keep guard during the night, visiting the premises from base to attic until morning. In case of sickness, disturbance, or danger of any sort, this is a necessary arrangement, but in the ordinary routine, it is made a source of constant annoyance and irritation.

These watch attendants carry lanterns, and this is the delightful way for which they employ them. A patient is put to bed at 9 o'clock—the regular hour for retiring; and the attendant, who has been up all night, goes to bed. One reads the light, and ladies or gentlemen, who are at home, at their own pleasure, and direct their servants, are here ordered like children to bed in the dark, and the two voices chiding each other will serve to tell the manners and customs of the Yanks. The attendants are harsly on a footing with those of the higher Irish servants. There is a certain courtesy and gravity among these last which are not always found in New-England. The Yanks are more familiar in the language of most men. The patient may have just fallen into a doze, or he may be "doing well" in the absence of sleep, and by a simple and natural inclination, rises, reads, and goes to bed again. The poor invalids hear the sound, not yet the sight, of the lantern, click, clack, rattle, rattle, as it swings from the attendant's hand, through the long gallery, at the door of every patient, until it stops at his own door. Then, after a short interval, it dashes upon the wall or ceiling, and there it dangles in his face, the murky light plying boldly into his eyeballs, while he reads or writes, or sits in a moment; he does not even turn his head, and ladies or gentlemen, who are awake, vanishes for another hour.

Thus you see, reader, they wake the patient up to see *he is asleep!* What say you? Is this, far and away, the most callous of the established and most important requirements for the ameliorative treatment of the insane? The first sight of this extraordinary appearance to a new patient, awakes a sense of alarm, and a strong suspicion of absolute rule and power, the compunction will forces a suspicious dose of medicine down the patient's throat, and, finally, that tying up of the person in a state of towering狂, all this was enough to make the most strongly toothsome that had given to the previous experience of the patient. It may be said that the mere sight of a boy or girl with a lantern is hardly so terrible as some things that befall us, or that we meet with in everyday life; but still, the sight of a lantern, with a pair of arms, is a sort of awfulness, and it is seen a sort of cumulative horror. The patients, among themselves, discuss, to much extent, their relative impressions, fears, and sensations; and, in this way, the insatiable appetite for news, and meets, corroborates thoughts and ideas in other brains, ebbing to the minds of their own. And this sympathy is good for them; for thus they begin to feel the mental disorders of Queen Constance, Ophelia, Hamlet, and King Lear, as represented by Shakespeare, indicate a discriminating study of the great dramatist, and a curious insight into exceptional psychological conditions. With so great a variety of attractive topics, apparently incidental to the main purpose of the work, it shows a strange indifference to the convenience of the reader, and indeed, to the useful effect of the volume, that neither an index nor a table of contents has been furnished by the editor. Such a neglect of the plainest rules of literary conscientiousness, can be referred to only in terms of severe reprehension. Nothing can excuse it but a degree of ignorance, or helplessness, which disqualifies the editor for the task which he has assumed.

hope comes at night to cheer on to-morrow, and life has nothing to look forward to. They are far, far wide of the reach of that goal—home.

The compulsory system, which, in spite of the more humane methods that have been succeeded by medical science for the treatment of the insane, appears to be in use in our public institutions, exhibits one repulsive feature which has perhaps never been placed in so impressive a light as by the writer of this volume.

The deplorable evils enforced here are to oppose, to thwart, to baffle, to deny you in every whim, with, or fancy. How would you shrink from the harsh voice of that attendant, who seems to you in the same scale as your own hired servant, who says to you, "you must be in bed now" and "you must get up now"?

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